Language Goal Area - General Suggestions for Speech

- Young children do not have adult-level speech skills. Make certain that you are working on age-appropriate areas. A speech-language pathologist can best make these decisions.

- Before young children can accurately make speech sounds, they must be able to discriminate the sound from other speech sounds. Simply put, this means that the child must be able to hear the difference between speech sounds. Listed below are several activities to work on discrimination:
  1) Assemble a group of objects or pictures that contain the target speech sound. Tell the child, “We are going to play a game. I am going to name some things, and you have to tell me if I say the name right or not. Pick out an object (for example, a cow) and ask, “Is this a tow?” For about half of the items, make an incorrect sound. If the child does not seem to hear the errors, slightly exaggerate the sound as you say it.
  2) Again, assemble a group of objects, half of which contain the target sound. Tell the child, “We are going to sort these things. Some of these things have a (target sound) in their names, and some of them don’t. We’re going to make two piles—one for things that have the (target sound) in their names, and a pile for the things that don’t. If the child does not seem to pick up on the difference, repeat the name and exaggerate the target sound.
  3) Show the child two objects or pictures, one of which begins with the target speech sound. Ask the child to show you which one starts with the target sound.

- When children are first learning specific sounds, you will notice that they are able to say the sound more accurately by itself or in a single word. When they say a sentence, however, they will make an error sound. This is a normal pattern. When you see this happening, work on helping the child to make longer utterances while using the correct speech sounds.

- Try to find and create opportunities for the child to use specific target sounds in everyday situations.

- If a child is capable of producing a correct speech sound, encourage correct speech sound production by pretending not to understand when they make a sound incorrectly. For example, Child: “I saw a thnake” Adult: “A thnake? What’s a thnake?” Child: “I mean a snake!” Adult: “Oh, a snake! I like the way you said that!”

- Any child working on speech sounds will benefit some from doing some oral-motor exercises. Refer to the listed exercises for appropriate suggestions.

- Any child working on speech sounds is also going to benefit from seeing what they are doing. If at all possible, use a mirror with the child when working on speech sounds.

- Posture can influence speech production. Take note of changes in the child’s speech sound

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